

Stedman, Edmund Clarence

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Lincoln Poetry

Poets

Edmund Clarence Stedman

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

For The Tribune.

Abraham Lincoln

ASSASSINATED GOOD FRIDAY, 1865.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

He said, and so went shaven to his fate—

Unknowing went, that generous heart and true.

Even while he spoke the slayer lay in wait,

And when the morning opened Heaven's gate

There passed the whitest soul a nation knew.

Henceforth all thoughts of pardon are too late;

They, in whose cause that arm its weapon drew,

Have murdered MERCY. Now alone shall

stand

Blind JUSTICE, with the sword unsheathed she

wore.

Hark, from the eastern to the western strand,

The swelling thunder of the people's roar:

What words they murmur—FETTER NOT HER

HAND!

SO LET IT SMITE, SUCH DEEDS SHALL BE NO MORE!

EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

April 15, 1865.

THE HAND OF LINCOLN

For well you fare, in God's good care,
Somewhere within the blue,
And know, to-day, your dearest dreams
Are true,—and true,—and true!

*THE HAND OF LINCOLN**BY EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN**Reprinted by special permission of Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston*

Look on this cast, and know the hand
That bore a nation in its hold:
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was,—how large of mold

The man who sped the woodman's team,
And deepest sunk the plowman's share,
And pushed the laden raft astream,
Of fate before him unaware.

This was the hand that knew to swing
The ax—since thus would Freedom train—
Her son—and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and toiled amain.

Firm hand, that loftier office took,
A conscious leader's will obeyed,
And, when men sought his word and look,
With steadfast might the gathering swayed.

No courtier's toying with a sword;
Nor minstrel's, laid across a lute;
A chief's, uplifted to the Lord
When all the kings of earth were mute!

The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet, lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out,—

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,

THE OUTLOOK,
FEB. 1, 1908.
pp. 259, 260.

Y. M. C. A. Association Men

February, 1922.

THE HAND of LINCOLN

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That palm erewhile was wont to
press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tender-
ness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out,—

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand, ap-
pears:

A type that Nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance
passed

The thought that bade a race be free!

—Edmund Clarence Stedman.

THE HAND OF LINCOLN.

Look on this case, and know the hand
That bore a nation in its hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—bow large of mold.

.

The band of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I race the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out.

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand appears:
A type that nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!
—Edmund Clarence Stedman.

THE HAND OF LINCOLN.

Look on this cast, and know the hand
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From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—how large of mold.

The man who sped the woodman's team,
And deepest sunk the plowman's share,
And pushed the laden raft astream,
Of fate before him unaware.

This was the hand that knew to swing
The ax—since thus would freedom train
Her son—and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and toiled amain.

Firm hand, that loftier office took,
A conscious leader's will obeyed,
And, when men sought his word and look,
With steadfast might the gathering
swayed.

No courtier's, toying with a sword,
Nor minstrel's, laid across a lute;
A chief's, uplifted to the Lord
When all the kings of earth were mute!

The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet, lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted card and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out—

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand, appears;
A type that nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!

—E. C. STEDMAN.

THE HAND OF LINCOLN.

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From this mute witness understand
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mold.

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team,
And deepest sank the plowman's
share,
And pushed the laden raft astream,
Of fate before him unaware,

This was the hand that knew to swing
The axe—since thus would freedom
train

Her son—and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and toiled
again.

Firm hand, that loftier office took,
A conscious leader's will obeyed,
And when men sought his word and
look,
With steadfast might the gathering
swayed.

No courtier's toying with a sword,
Nor minstrel's, laid across a lute;
A chief's, uplifted to the Lord,
When all the kings on earth were
mute.

The hand of Anak, sinew strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to
press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tender-
ness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out.

The love that cast an aureole.

Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man
Built up from your large hand ap-
pears
A type that nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through his living semblance
passed

The thought that bade a race be free.
—EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

THE HAND OF LINCOLN.

Look on this case, and know the hand
That bore a nation in its hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—how large of mold.

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The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A plying frame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out.

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand appears:
A type that nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!
—Edmund Clarence Stedman.

The Hand of Lincoln.

Look on this cast, and know the hand
That bore a nation in his hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was,—how large of
mould.

This was the hand that knew to swing
The axe—since thus would Freedom
train

Her son—and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and tolled
again.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand, ap-
pears;

A type that Nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance pas-
sed

The thought that bade a race be free!
Edmund Clarence Stedman.

The Hand of Lincoln

By Edmund Clarence Steadman

Look on this cast, and know the hand
That bore a Nation in its hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—how large a mold.

The man who sped the woodsman's team,
And deepest sunk the ploughman's share,
And pushed the laden raft astream,
Of fate before him unaware.

His was the hand that knew to swing
The ax—since thus would Freedom train
Her son—and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and toiled again.

Firm hand, that loftier office took,
A conscious leader's will obeyed;
And, when men sought his word and look,
With steadfast might the gathering swayed.

No courtier's, toying with a sword,
Nor minstrel's, laid across a lute;
A chief's, uplifted to the Lord
When all the kings of earth were mute!

The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet, lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out.

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole;
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand, appears;
A type that Nation wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he;
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!

The Hand of Lincoln

*L*OOK on this cast, and know the band
That bore a nation in its hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—how large of mold.

*The band of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.*

*For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.*

*Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.*

*For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
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Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.*

*Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand appears:
A type that nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.*

*What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!*

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

THE HAND OF LINCOLN.

BY EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

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From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—how large of mould

The man who sped the woodman's team
And deepest sunk the plowman's share,
And pushed the laden raft astream;
Of fate before him unaware.

This was the hand that knew to swing
The ax—since thus would Freedom train
Her son—and made the forest ring,
And drove the wedge, and toiled amain.

Firm hand, that loftier office took,
A conscious leader's will obeyed,
And when men sought his word and look,
With steadfast might the gathering swayed.

No courtier's, toying with a sword;
Nor minstrel's, laid across a lute;
A chief's, uplifted to the Lord
When all the kings of earth were mute!

The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much:

For here in mottled eord and vein
I trace the varying ehart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow,
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness:

For something of a formless grace
This moulded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit in and out—

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo! as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand, appears—
A type that Nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless east
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!

—From The Independent.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

ASSASSINATED GOOD FRIDAY, 1865.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

He said, and so went shriven to his fate—

Unknowing went, that generous heart and true.

Even while he spoke the slayer lay in wait,

And when the morning opened Heaven's gate

There passed the whitest soul a nation knew.

Henceforth all thoughts of pardon are too late;

They, in whose cause that arm its weapon drew,

Have murdered Mercy. Now alone shall stand

Blind Justice, with the sword unsheathed she wore.

Hark, from the eastern to the western strand

The swelling thunder of the people's roar:

What words they murmur—Fetter not her hand!

So let it smite, such deeds shall be no more!

Glen's Falls, Mass. EDMUND C. STEDMAN.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

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Special Days Source 1868-9

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

(FROM "PUNCH")

YOU lay a wreath on murder'd Lincoln's
bier,
You, who with mocking pencil went to
trace,
Broad for the self-complaisant British
sneer,
His length of shambling limb, his fur-
row'd face,

His gaunt, gnarl'd hands, his unkempt,
bristling hair,
His garb uncouth, his bearing ill at ease,
His lack of all we prize as debonair,
Of power or will to shine, of art to please;

You, whose smart pen back'd up the pencil's
laugh,
Judging each step as though the way
were plain;
Reckless, so it could point its paragraph,
Of chief's perplexity, or people's pain,--

Beside this corpse, that bears for winding-
sheet
The Stars and Stripes he liv'd to rear
anew,
Between the mourners at his head and feet,
Say, scurrile jester, is there room for you?

Yes: he had liv'd to shame me from my
sneer,
To lame my pencil and confute my pen;
To make me own this hind of princes peer,
This rail-splitter a true-born king of
men.

My shallow judgment I had learn'd to rue,
Noting how to occasion's height he rose;
How his quaint wit made home-truth seem
more true;
How, iron-like, his temper grew by
blows;

How humble, yet how hopeful he could
be;
How in good fortune and in ill the same;
Nor bitter in success, nor boastful he,
Thirsty for gold, nor feverish for fame.

He went about his work,-- such work as
few
Ever had laid on head and heart and
hand,--
As one who knows, where there's a task
to do,
Man's honest will must Heaven's good
grace command;

Who trusts the strength will with the bur-
den grow,
That God makes instruments to work
his will,
If but that will we can arrive to know,
Nor tamper with the weights of good
and ill.

So he went forth to battle, on the side
That he felt clear was Liberty's and
Right's,
As in his peasant boyhood he had plied
His warfare with rude Nature's thwart-
ing might,--

The unclear'd forest, the unbroken soil,
The iron bark that turns the lumberer's
axe,
The rapid that o'erbears the boatman's
toil,
The prairie hiding the maz'd wanderer's
tracks.

The ambush'd Indian, and the prowling
bear,--
Such were the deeds that help'd his
youth to train :
Rough culture, but such trees large fruit
may bear,
If but their stocks be of right girth and
grain.

So he grew up, a destin'd work to do,
And he liv'd to do it; four long-suffering
years'
Ill fate, ill feeling, ill report liv'd through,
And then he heard the hisses change to cheers,

The taunts to tribute, the abuse to praise,
And took both with the same unwaver-
ing mood,--

Till, as he came on light from darkling
days,
And seem'd to touch the goal from where
he stood,

A felon hand, between the goal and him,
Reach'd from behind his back, a trigger
prest,
And those perplex'd and patient eyes were
dim,
Those gaunt, long-laboring limbs were
laid to rest.

The words of mercy were upon his lips,
Forgiveness in his heart and on his
pen,
When this vile murderer brought swift
eclipse
To thoughts of peace on earth, good will
to men.

The Old World and the New, from sea to
sea,
Utter one voice of sympathy and shame.
Sore heart, so stopp'd when it at last beat
high !
Sad life, cut short just as its triumph
came !

A deed accurs'd! Strokes have been
struck before
By the assassin's hand, whereof men
doubt
If more of horror or disgrace they bore;
But thy foul crime, like Cain's, stands
darkly out.

Vile hand, that brandest murder on a strife,
Whate'er its grounds, stoutly and nobly
striven,
And with the martyr's crown crownest a life
With much to praise, little to be for-
given.



The HAND OF LINCOLN

LOOK on this cast and know the hand
That bore a nation in its hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was---how large of mold. . . .

The hand of Anak, sinewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet, lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

—Edmund Clarence Stedman.





Lincoln, Our Lincoln

A Page of Famous Tributes to the Great Emancipator

O Captain! My Captain!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rock, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But, O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores and ring, O bells!
But I with mournful tread
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

WALT WHITMAN

The Hand of Lincoln

LOOK on this cast, and know the hand
That bore a nation in its hold;
From this mute witness understand
What Lincoln was—how large of mold.

The hand of Anak, strewed strong,
The fingers that on greatness clutch;
Yet lo! the marks their lines along
Of one who strove and suffered much.

For here in knotted cord and vein
I trace the varying chart of years;
I know the troubled heart, the strain,
The weight of Atlas—and the tears.

Again I see the patient brow
That palm erewhile was wont to press;
And now 'tis furrowed deep, and now
Made smooth with hope and tenderness.

For something of a formless grace
This molded outline plays about;
A pitying flame, beyond our trace,
Breathes like a spirit, in and out.

The love that cast an aureole
Round one who, longer to endure,
Called mirth to ease his ceaseless dole,
Yet kept his nobler purpose sure.

Lo, as I gaze, the statured man,
Built up from yon large hand appears:
A type that nature wills to plan
But once in all a people's years.

What better than this voiceless cast
To tell of such a one as he,
Since through its living semblance passed
The thought that bade a race be free!

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

The Commemoration Ode

HOW beautiful to see
Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,
Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;
One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,
Not lured by any cheat of birth
But by his clear-grained human worth,
And brave old wisdom of sincerity!
They knew that outward grace is dust;
They could not choose but trust
In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,
And supple tempered will
That bent like perfect steel to spring again and thrust.

His was no lonely mountain-peak of mind,
Thrusting to thin air o'er our cloudy bars,
A sea-mark now, now lost in vapors blind;
Broad prairie rather, genial, level-lined,
Fruitful and friendly for all human kind,
Yet also nigh to heaven and loved of loftiest stars.

He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,
Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But, at last, silence comes;
These all are gone, and standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly, earnest, brave, foreseeing man.
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

He said, and so went shriven to his fate,—
Unknowing went, that generous heart and true.

Even while he spoke the slayer lay in wait,
And when the morning opened Heaven's gate.

There passed the whitest soul a nation knew.
Henceforth all thoughts of pardon are too late;

They, in whose cause that arm its weapon drew,

Have murdered Mercy. Now alone shall stand

Blind Justice, with the sword unsheathed she wore.

Hark from the Eastern to the Western strand,

The swelling thunder of the people's roar:
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So let it smite, such deeds shall be no more!

